

of abstract terms is a curious question, and some remarkable experiments in their use had been made by the Latin Aristotelians before this time. In the same way in which we talk of the *quantity* and *quality* of a thing, they spoke of its *quiddity*.¹⁷

We may consider the reign of mere disputation as fully established at the time of which we are now speaking; and the only kind of philosophy henceforth studied was one in which no sound physical science had or could have a place. The wavering abstractions, indistinct generalizations, and loose classifications of common language, which we have already noted as the fountain of the physics of the Greek Schools of philosophy, were also the only source from which the Schoolmen of the middle ages drew their views, or rather their arguments: and though these notional and verbal relations were invested with a most complex and pedantic technicality, they did not, on that account, become at all more precise as notions, or more likely to lead to a single real truth. Instead of acquiring distinct ideas, they multiplied abstract terms; instead of real generalizations, they had recourse to verbal distinctions. The whole course of their employments tended to make them, not only ignorant of physical truth, but incapable of conceiving its nature.

Having thus taken upon themselves the task of raising and discussing questions by means of abstract terms, verbal distinctions, and logical rules alone, there was no tendency in their activity to come to an end, as there was no progress. The same questions, the same answers, the same difficulties, the same solutions, the same verbal subtleties,—sought for, admired, cavilled at, abandoned, reproduced, and again admired,—might recur without limit. John of Salisbury¹⁸ observes of the Parisian teachers, that, after several years' absence, he found them not a step advanced, and still employed in urging and parrying the same arguments; and this, as Mr. Hallam remarks,¹⁹ "was equally applicable to the period of centuries." The same knots were tied and

¹⁷ Deg. iv. 494.

¹⁸ He studied logic at Paris, at St. Geneviève, and then left them. "Duodecennium mihi elapsam est diversis studiis occupatum. Jucundum itaque visum est veteres quos reliqueram, et quos adhuc Dialectica detinebat in montu, (Sanctæ Genovefæ) revisere socios, conferre cum eis super ambiguitatibus pristinis; ut nostram invicem collatione mutuâ commetiremur profectum. Inveni sunt, qui fuerant, et ubi; neque enim ad pulnam visi sunt processisse ad quæstiones pristinis dirimendas, neque propositiunculam unam adjecerant. Quibus urgebant stimulis eisdem et ipsi urgebantur," &c. *Metalogicus*, lib. ii. cap. 10.

¹⁹ *Middle Ages*, iii. 537.